



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

*Planning Update #1*

*August 2006*

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## Help Ridgefield NWR Plan for the Future!

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is about to embark on an important multi-year process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Refuge. The CCP will guide overall refuge management for the next 15 years. The public involvement phase of the process will begin with public meetings on September 14 and September 20, 2006 (see page 6 for details). Your ideas and comments will be an important

part of the process, so we'd like to invite you to participate.

This Planning Update is the first in a series of updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that will keep you informed about the CCP for Ridgefield NWR.

This update provides an overview of the CCP process and your role in that process.

This planning update also provides you with background information about the purposes for which Ridgefield NWR was established; preliminary goals derived from those purposes; and a preliminary list of issues, concerns, and opportunities that will be addressed in the CCP. We welcome your comments on the preliminary goals and issues described in this update.

Please feel free to contact the Project Leader, Tim Bodeen, or Refuge Manager, Jennifer Brown, if you have any questions. See page 6 for contact information.

## About the CCP

When Congress amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (Refuge Administration Act) in 1997, it incorporated an underlying philosophy that "wildlife comes first" on refuges. The Act provided the Fish and Wildlife Service with guidance for managing refuges to ensure the long-term conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. It also established six priority public uses on National Wildlife Refuges (wildlife observation and photography, hunting, fishing, interpretation, and environmental education) and strengthened the compatibility determination process for assuring that these and other activities do not conflict with refuge management purposes and goals.

The Refuge Administration Act required all lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System to be managed in accordance with a CCP. The CCP for Ridgefield NWR will outline refuge goals, objectives, and management strategies for achieving the purposes for which the Refuge was established. It will be a flexible, "living" document that will be updated every 15 years. Most importantly, a CCP ensures that the management of each refuge reflects the purposes of that refuge and the mission, policies, and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

*(Continued on next page)*



*An osprey enjoys its meal.*

## About the CCP (continued)

The CCP will also:

- Provide the public with information on refuge management actions;
- Provide a vision statement that describes desired future conditions for the refuge;
- Ensure the compatibility of current and future uses of the refuge with its purposes;
- Provide long-term continuity in refuge management; and
- Provide budget justification for operation and maintenance and facility development requests.

Concurrently with the CCP, we will develop documentation that analyzes the environmental consequences of implementing various management alternatives. This analysis will be developed for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## Your involvement can help the Refuge

The planning team identified preliminary issues, concerns, and opportunities for the Refuge in the early planning stages of the CCP. Your comments and/or participation will be critical to the success of this CCP's development. The public meetings on September 14 and 20 are your initial opportunity to meet the refuge planning team, help us identify issues, concerns, and opportunities, and have your questions about the Refuge or the CCP answered.

You will have the opportunity to comment in later phases of CCP development, so you can submit comments at any time, but participating during scoping is the best way to ensure that your issues and ideas are considered during the early stages of the CCP planning process. We encourage you to attend the public meetings, and invite others who are interested in planning the future of Ridgefield NWR.

Written comments on the scope of the CCP are also welcome. Written comments may be submitted at the public meetings, or sent to us via mail, fax, or e-mail (see page 6 for contact information). To allow us to consider your input while writing the Draft CCP, we request that you provide written comments on the scope of the CCP by November 3, 2006. We project that the draft CCP and NEPA document for Ridgefield NWR will be available for public review in May 2008.



*Photos (from left to right):  
Great blue heron;  
A tree swallow peers from its nest;  
Young tundra swans rest in Refuge wetlands.*





## Refuge Purposes—Keystone of the CCP

The Refuge Administration Act directs the FWS to manage each refuge to fulfill the mission of the Refuge System; to maintain and, where appropriate, restore the refuge's ecological integrity; and achieve the specific purposes for which the refuge was established.

The Ridgefield NWR was established in 1965. The purposes for which Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge was established, follow. These purposes apply to all lands of the Refuge:

- For use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.
- To provide wintering habitat for dusky Canada goose and other waterfowl. To also provide breeding and migration use and substantial public shooting in area. (Note: "Public shooting" refers specifically to waterfowl hunting: "A portion of the area in line with management finding but not to exceed 40%, will be considered for waterfowl hunting in the future.")

- To provide resting and wintering area for migratory waterfowl.

The following purposes apply to specific tracts of the refuge:

- To preclude uses that would be incompatible with wildlife use, such as industrial, commercial, or residential development, and to gain the capability to manage the land for increased wildlife benefits. (Bachelor Island Unit; Ridgeport Dairy Unit.)
- To increase overwintering carrying capacity for dabbling ducks . . . To maintain current capacity in support of existing overwintering use by Canada geese, swans, and diving ducks. (Bachelor Island Unit, Ridgeport Dairy Unit.)
- For the development, advancement, management, conservation and protection of fish and wildlife resources. (Ridgeport Dairy Unit.)
- To prevent major changes in the present pattern of wildlife use. (Ridgeport Dairy Unit.)

The planning team for Ridgefield NWR has identified the following preliminary goals, which support the purposes for which the Refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Since these goals are preliminary, we encourage your comments on them during public scoping.

#### **Wildlife and Habitat Goals:**

1. Provide and manage a mixture of secure, diverse, productive, high-quality grassland habitats for foraging migratory waterfowl, and grassland-dependent wildlife.
2. Produce annual wildlife food crops (row crops) for migratory birds and other wildlife.
3. Provide, manage, and enhance a natural diversity of wetland habitats
4. Protect, manage, and enhance a natural diversity of native floodplain forests representative of the Lower Columbia River ecosystem.
5. Protect, manage, and enhance a natural diversity of native upland forests representative of the Lower Columbia River ecosystem.
6. Protect and enhance the natural in-stream riverine habitats representative of the lower Columbia River ecosystem.
7. Conduct inventory, monitoring, and research to support adaptive management decisions on the Refuge.



*The Refuge's Canada Goose mascot invites folks to visit the refuge.*

#### **Public Use Goals:**

1. Waterfowl hunters of all abilities will enjoy a quality, safe hunting program that provides a variety of waterfowl hunting experiences, promotes youth hunting, balances hunt program needs with other public use program needs, and minimizes impacts to non-target species. As a result of participating in the waterfowl hunting program, hunters will gain a better understanding of the refuge's mission and its resource management.
2. Visitors of all abilities will have the opportunity to participate in safe, quality wildlife-dependent recreation programs, including wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation, that minimize wildlife disturbance in the face of increasing Refuge visitation. As a result of participating in these programs, visitors will value and support Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.
3. The Refuge will utilize its unique cultural resources to enlighten visitors about the Refuge's natural and cultural history. Through interpretive and educational activities the visitor will gain an understanding and appreciation for its natural and cultural heritage.
4. Through Refuge outreach efforts local residents will have the opportunity to gain an appreciation and understanding of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and National Wildlife Refuge System missions.
5. Students from local schools will participate in quality environmental and cultural education programs that meet State educational requirements and provide memorable experiences that foster a connection with nature and the Refuge. As a result of their participation in these programs, students will understand the Refuge's role in wildlife conservation and incorporate a conservation ethic into their everyday lives.



*Cinnamon teal drake.*





## Preliminary Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities at Ridgefield NWR

These are preliminary issues, concerns and opportunities that the Ridgefield NWR planning team has identified for consideration in the CCP. We encourage you to submit comments on these topics, or let us know about additional ones. (A detailed listing of issues, concerns and opportunities in each category below will be available on the Refuge website and at public meetings.)

**Habitat Management and Restoration:** What actions shall the Refuge take to sustain and restore priority species and habitats over the next 15 years? How can the Refuge contribute to the restoration of rare habitats and the recovery of endangered and threatened species of the lower Columbia River ecosystem?

**Public Use and Access:** What type and level of recreation opportunities should be provided? Are existing access points adequate and appropriate? Which areas of the Refuge should be managed as undisturbed sanctuary areas and which areas should be open to public use? How will the recently completed Cathlapotle Plankhouse fit into interpretation and education programs on the Refuge?

**Invasive Species Control:** How do invasive species affect functioning native systems and what actions should be taken to reduce the incidence and spread of invasive species?

**Cultural Resources:** How will the Refuge protect its significant archaeological and historic sites? What level and type of cultural resources education should be provided to the public?



*Above: Hunters using pit blinds display their harvest.  
Below: The interior of the Cathlapotle Plankhouse.*

## Planning Schedule

Planning Update #1 .....	August 2006
Public Meetings .....	September 14 & 20, 2006
Planning Update #2 (Results of initial scoping) .....	January 2007
Open house—review of preliminary alternatives; Planning Update #3 .....	June 2007
Public Review of Draft CCP; Planning Update #4 .....	May 2008
Response to public comments on Draft CCP .....	July 2008
Distribution of the Final CCP; final planning update .....	December 2008

## Public Meeting Dates and Locations

**September 14, 2006, 6-9 p.m.**  
**Ridgefield Community Center**  
 210 North Main Avenue  
 Ridgefield, WA 98642.

Directions: from Vancouver, Washington, follow I-5 North; take exit 14 (Pioneer Street/Ridgefield); travel west on Pioneer Avenue approximately 3 miles into downtown Ridgefield. At the first stop sign, turn right on Main St. Travel two blocks to the Community Center.

**September 20, 2006, 6-9 p.m.**  
**Vancouver Community Library**  
 1007 East Mill Plain Boulevard  
 Vancouver, WA 98663.

Directions: from Interstate 5 (north or southbound), take exit 1C (the Mill Plain exit). The Vancouver Community Library is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of E. Mill Plain Blvd. and Ft. Vancouver Way, one block east of the Mill Plain exit.

**November 3, 2006** Comments on scope of the CCP due in order to be considered in the draft CCP and NEPA document



## Comments or questions? Contact us

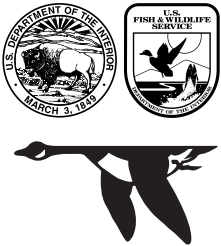
Address comments, questions, and requests for further information to:

Tim Bodeen, Project Leader  
 Ridgefield NWR Complex  
 PO Box 457  
 Ridgefield, Washington 98642  
 (360) 887-4106

Comments may be faxed to (360) 887-4109, or e-mailed to:

[FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov](mailto:FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov)

Please put "Ridgefield NWR CCP Scoping" on the subject line.



U.S. Department of the Interior  
 Fish and Wildlife Service  
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<http://ridgefieldrefuges.fws.gov>